

17. The Book of Romans 1:21-25-Part 1

Paul's Epistle to the Romans
A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
(5-24-23)

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We are currently in a section in Romans Chapter 1 where Paul is proving that the natural man (the unbeliever/pagan) is condemned by God.

Why is he or she condemned? —

Romans 1:19–20 (NKJV)

¹⁹ because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.*

In other words, even people who have never had the gospel preached to them, have had the knowledge of God revealed to them—through the creation! He is telling us that although the creation is incomplete in its revelation of God (it doesn't give us any specifics about Him, it doesn't tell us His name, what He loves and hates, how we can have a relationship with Him etc.).

It nevertheless is such a clear revelation of His *existence* that anyone who looks at the creation and rejects the existence of God is without excuse and will be held accountable by Him on the Day of Judgment.

But Paul has just *started* his indictment of the pagan world with verses 19 and 20—he now elaborates on its guilt before God starting with verse 21—

Romans 1:21–25 (NKJV)

²¹ because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. ²⁴ Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

We hear a lot of talk today about spiritual warfare—even more than usual. You can't turn on Christian TV or radio without some preacher, pastor or evangelist talking about how spiritual warfare is *ramping up*.

Books are being cranked out and conferences are springing up everywhere promising to train Christians how to be victorious soldiers for Jesus in the battle against the forces of wickedness in the spirit realm. Many in the Word of Faith movement have their own unique strategies for defeating these demonic enemies—even developing special phrases that must be uttered if demons are to be sent screaming into the abyss!

While I disagree with much of the thinking and techniques that undergird the spiritual warfare movement—I nevertheless believe in and take very seriously spiritual warfare itself.

If I were to ask you to turn to some of the passages in Scripture that deal with the subject of spiritual warfare—I doubt if any of you would turn to our text tonight. Yet, Romans 1:21-25 is one of the greatest in all the Bible for laying out what is really at the heart of all spiritual warfare.

Before we look at the passage in Romans 1—let’s set the stage by looking at one of the classic passages on spiritual warfare in the New Testament—

Ephesians 6:10-12 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

(Paul continues down through verse 18 but we’ll stop here)

When we gave our lives to Jesus we entered into a war—a war that, although invisible, is still very much real. We are at war with an extremely powerful, super intelligent, hyper-malevolent spirit-being known as the Devil who commands a very powerful demonic army.

The devil and his army are determined to destroy your walk, your witness, and your ministry for God—starting with your marriage.

The devil wants to bring you down so that God gets no glory from your life—and he isn’t playing games and will do whatever he can to accomplish his mission.

Paul drives this theme home (that we are soldiers of Christ) in different places in his writings—

2 Timothy 2:3-4 (NKJV)

³ You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. ⁴ No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

Now besides Ephesians 6, the other classic passage on the subject of spiritual warfare is found in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5:

2 Corinthians 10:3–5 (NKJV)

³ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

Let me try to paraphrase what Paul is saying here—

“For although we live in these physical bodies, we don’t fight this war like any other war man has ever fought on earth. We can’t fight this war with physical weapons (guns, smart bombs, tanks, bazookas etc.)—but take heart because God has provided His people with spiritual weapons that are more than able to pull down the devil’s strongholds...”

In these verses in 2 Corinthians 10 Paul is telling us about the true nature of spiritual warfare—primarily that spiritual warfare is all about “pulling down strongholds.” (verse 4)

The NASB translates 2 Corinthians 10:4 as—"for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but **divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.**" In other words, these weapons don't come from man—they have been given to us by God because only they will be able to bring down these strongholds (fortresses) that we face.

It's interesting that the word for "**fortress**" could also be translated "*prison*" and "*tomb*." These fortresses that we assault are the fortresses of the damned that are really their *prisons* and will become their *tombs* if someone doesn't set them free.

And Paul chose his words carefully because he wanted us to know what we are up against—as one pastor put it,

"We are assaulting massive stone fortresses, not cardboard houses or tents, and you can't do that with peashooters and popguns shooting ping-pong balls."

You can't pull these fortresses down with clever gimmicks and verbal formulas like the Word of Faith movement teaches, or with human philosophies like psychology or self-help teachings—it takes something much more powerful to smash these satanic fortresses.

➤ *So, what are these mighty weapons God has given to us to smash these strongholds or fortresses?*

Paul tells us in Ephesians 6—the Word of God and prayer!

➤ Now the question is—"*What are these fortresses?*"

Well, some people think that spiritual warfare against fortresses is talking about demons and that real spiritual warfare is to engage yourself in chasing demons.

Running after this demon and that demon (the demon of lust, sickness, poverty, alcohol, cigarettes, chocolate cake etc.)—binding them along with Satan, pronouncing judgments upon them and sending them to the abyss. (**Listen:** '*territorial demons*' on Mt. Everest)

Folks, that is not what spiritual warfare is all about—in fact that's ridiculous. (Explain)

Luke 22:31–32 (NKJV)

³¹ And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift *you* as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail..." [not '*I have bound him in My name*']

2 Corinthians 12:7–9 (NKJV)

⁷ And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. ⁸ Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. ⁹ And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

If this doctrine of binding Satan was valid then why didn't Paul use it when he was being attacked by the Devil?

He didn't because Satan can't do anything to us unless God allows him to (Job 1).

Satan is serving the purposes of God in our lives Who is using him to teach us how to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ—how to persevere under pressure and be conformed into the image of Jesus.

➤ “So, you’re saying I shouldn’t do anything when Satan attacks me, I should just submit to it?”

No, I’m not saying that—I’m saying what James and Peter said:

James 4:7 (NKJV)

⁷ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

1 Peter 5:8-10 (NKJV)

⁸ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. ⁹ Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

We are commanded to *resist* the devil being steadfast in the faith—but we are not ever commanded to *bind* him—Jesus bound the ‘strongman’ on Calvary’s Cross.

“O, but Jesus told us that whatever we bind on earth will be bound in heaven...” (Explain ‘binding and loosing’).

We are commanded to *resist* the Devil, but we are not ever commanded to *bind* him—and we resist him by putting on the whole armor of God every day and walking closely with the Lord. (Ephesians 6:11)

➤ So, what is real spiritual warfare all about?

➤ How is it really fought and won—and what are these ‘strongholds’ or ‘fortresses’ Paul is talking about?

➤ What are these strongholds? Verse 5 tells us.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 (NKJV)

⁴ For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

“**Pulling down strongholds**” in verse 4, relates to “**casting down arguments**” in verse 5 (in verse 4 Paul gives the metaphor, and in verse 5 he explains the metaphor).

These *strongholds* or *fortresses* are “**arguments**”.

➤ “Ok, but what exactly does that mean?”

The Greek word is *logismos* and it means, “*Thoughts, opinions, philosophies, theories,*”—or to sum it up—“**Ideologies**” (i.e., “belief systems”).

All the aberrant ideologies that people take refuge in—all the strongholds of Satan’s lies, whether they be the ‘*wisdom of man*’ or ‘*doctrines of demons*’ that people seek to fortify themselves in against the true knowledge of God—these are the fortresses we are up against.

These fortresses aren’t demons—but they are the doctrines and philosophies that demons inspire and promote—which fallen man sets up in rebellion and in defiance of God and His Word.

The “**and**” is *kai* in the Greek and should be translated “**even.**”

Paul is saying that we are fighting against ideologies—“...**even every high thing** (every proud, arrogant, lofty ideology) **that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.**” (verse 5)

Spiritual warfare is primarily ideological in nature—in other words, we are fighting against the lies, thoughts, opinions, philosophies, and theories that people raise up against the true knowledge of God. Or to put it another way—spiritual warfare is all about fighting against the brainwashing of the devil who has pumped incessantly into the minds of people through the mass media, and many other outlets all of his satanic propaganda—all of his anti-God, anti-Christ, and anti-Bible ideologies!

This would include all the false religions of the world, the cults, and all the assorted ‘isms’ (atheism, communism, Marxism, secular humanism)—and the one that dominates our universities, and centers of science, politics and education, the reigning ideology of our day—naturalism (which we looked at last week).

Now, compare Romans 1:21-22 with what Paul was talking about in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5—and you’ll see that he’s talking about the same thing!

In fact, it happens to be the same word used in Romans 1:21—“...**because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts** [logismos—i.e., ‘ideologies’ or ‘belief systems’], **and their foolish hearts were darkened.**”

Paul carries the idea of spiritual warfare being waged primarily in the mind (the place where ideologies or belief systems originate) down in verse 28 of Romans 1—

Romans 1:28 (NKJV)

²⁸ **And even as they did not like to retain God in *their knowledge*, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;**

Primarily, on a day-by-day basis, spiritual warfare is all about rescuing people who have been taken captive by the devil through his lies and we have the truth that alone can set them free—the gospel.

John 8:31–32 (AMP)

³¹ So Jesus said to those Jews who had believed in Him, If you abide in My word [hold fast to My teachings and live in accordance with them], you are truly My disciples. ³² And you will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free [free from Satan’s lies]..

Spiritual warfare is the battle between the truth of God and the lies of the Devil—and the main battlefield where it is fought is in our minds for control of our thinking. The Bible says that Satan has “*blinded the minds of those who do not believe, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ...should shine on them.*” (2 Corinthians 4:4)

This doesn’t mean they are helpless victims—Satan can only blind their minds because *they* love darkness (living evil, sinful lives) rather than loving and living the light of God’s truth! (John 3:19-20)

But even after we get saved the satanic attacks in our minds don’t end—

2 Corinthians 2:11 (NKJV)

...lest Satan should take advantage of us (believers); for we are not ignorant of his devices (mind games).

Again, the mind is the central battleground where most spiritual warfare is fought because Satan knows if he can control your thinking—**he can control you!**

That's why the New Testament has so much to say about our minds as Christians—

Colossians 3:2 (NKJV)

² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

Mark 12:30 (NKJV)

³⁰ *And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.* ' This is the first commandment.

Philippians 2:5 (NKJV)

⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

Ephesians 2:3 (NKJV)

³ among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind...

Romans 8:7 (NKJV)

⁷ Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

Colossians 1:21 (NKJV)

²¹ And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled...

That's why salvation begins with a change of mind.

The Bible says that salvation requires a person to first of all repent—

Mark 1:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ [Jesus]... "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

Acts 17:30 (NKJV)

³⁰ Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent...

The Greek word for repentance is 'metanoia' which means to "*change your mind*."

Once a person repents and receives Jesus as their Lord and Savior, then Christians are commanded—

Romans 12:2 (NKJV)

² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

This transformation by the renewing of your mind will only take place if you continually fill your mind with the Word of God—

John 8:31–32 (NKJV)

³¹ Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide [continue] in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

So spiritual warfare is all about freedom—our own freedom from bondage to Satan (inward struggles)—but also about delivering unbelievers from the Devil’s lies (his evil ideologies).

Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil and as the Captain of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10) has enlisted us as soldiers to continue to fight the good fight of faith in the battle with the god of this world which is being waged for the souls of men and women—

2 Timothy 2:24–26 (NKJV)

²⁴ And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, ²⁵ in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, ²⁶ and *that* they may come to their senses *and escape* the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to *do* his will.

So, spiritual warfare at its core is a fight for control of a person’s thinking.

Now as you fill your mind with God’s Word you begin to think like God thinks—which means you stop thinking like the world thinks.

The result will be that you will be transformed in your life from the inside out by the Holy Spirit.

But here in Romans 1:21-25 Paul is dealing with pagans (unbelievers) who reject the knowledge of God (first of all in creation and then in His Word)—and the result was that rather than having the *light* of God’s truth to guide them and keep them from the Devil’s lies—they became enveloped, enshrouded, and imprisoned in demonic spiritual *darkness*:

Romans 1:21–25 (NKJV)

²¹ **because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.** ²² **Professing to be wise, they became fools [the Greek word is the word we get the word ‘moron’ from, ²³ and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.** ²⁴ **Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.**

Let me just set up next week’s study—a very important study that will explain the world we are living in a way you may never have thought of.

It all began in the Garden of Eden. In the Garden of Eden, we have the ‘headwaters’ of two ‘information streams’ that flowed into the whole world and down through the centuries and from which all religious ideologies (and many secular) have descended.

As I said, they both got their start in the Garden of Eden—

1. *The Word of God (the basis for Judeo-Christianity).*
2. *The lie of the Devil (which became the basis for every other belief system).*

In John Chapter 8 Jesus called Satan the ‘*father of lies.*’

But of all the lies the Devil has filled the world with—there is one lie that has given birth to them all spiritually speaking.

In Romans 1:25 Paul calls it “the lie.”

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower—please reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Want to know more? Click [here](#).

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